

WorkFirst Reexamination Workgroup

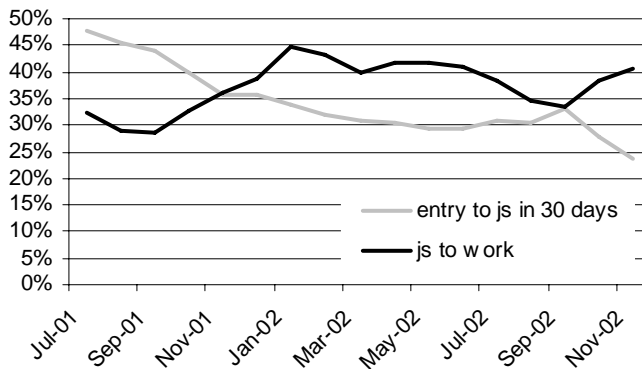
Focus Area Briefing Paper

Issue: Referring clients to Job Search

Goal: Increase self-sufficiency

Description:

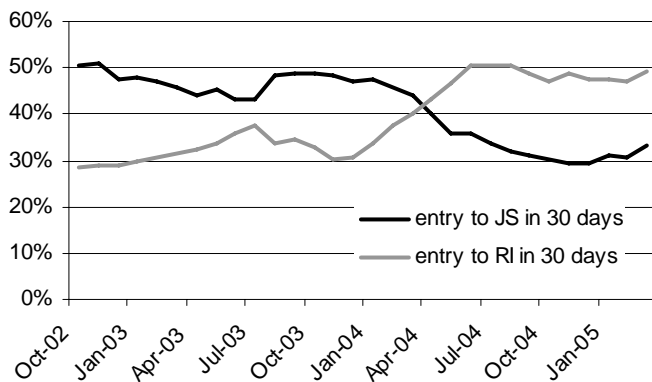
The number of clients starting job search within 30 days of starting WorkFirst has declined dramatically since early 2004, while at the same time, the rate at which job search clients have been going to work has risen:



Background:

What have clients been doing in lieu of going to job search?

The corresponding shift in the 'entrance to activities' report has been into the 'RI,' or 'resolving issues' component. As described in the WorkFirst Handbook, "DSHS staff must use the RI (job search referral) code in eJAS to refer parents to ESD for job search, which can last for up to twelve weeks. RI may be coded for up to seven days while the participant is arranging child care and transportation, or is dealing with other issues that can be resolved in a short period of time. An additional seven days in RI can be added if necessary." This rise in RI cases, then, indicates that a significant number of parents have an RI code opened, but never progress from that coding to job search (or take over one month to do so).



These RI components last, on average, 5 days. Roughly 60% of clients who open RI components follow them up with job search enrollment, although that participation may not be

sustained enough to count in the 'job search to work' measure, which only includes clients who show up for job search for at least five days. Of the clients who do not follow their RI with job search participation, the bulk move into pre-sanction components.

How would having more clients in job search affect placement rates and caseloads?

There is a subtle, but consistent, relationship between the rate at which clients are referred to job search and caseload reduction over FY05. For example, (at the extremes), the Port Angeles office referred 22% of its entrants, on average, to job search, and their caseload rose by 10%, while the Shelton referred 49% of its entrants, on average, to job search, and their caseload fell by 35%.

In addition, those offices which have consistently excelled in performance across the board in FY05 (such as Spokane Valley, White Center, and Ellensburg) have higher rates of job search starts. Among lower performing offices, the results are mixed: Belltown and Port Angeles have low job search rates (18% and 23%), while Goldendale is at the state mean (31%) and King North has a high rate of job search starts (40%).

As higher job search placement rates correlate with lower job search enrollment rates, the concern arises that job search may be currently placing the 'creamed' clients, and harder-to-place clients are not being given the opportunity to benefit from job search services. There is no clear evidence to support this in a quick review of demographic trends.

Historically, an entry-to-job-search rate of 45% seems reasonable. If clients were currently reaching job search at this rate, and being placed in jobs at the current rate, an average of 252 more clients would have been placed in jobs each month in FY05. Even were the concern of a 'creamed' job search to some degree true, a 45% entry to job search rate, paired with a 10% *reduction* in the job search placement rate would yield 172 more job placements each month.

